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ABSTRACT

The book, "Managing by Negotiations," by Earl Brooks and George S. Odiorne, is reviewed in this document. Negotiation is discussed as an answer to the dilemma of achieving organizational effectiveness created by the recent shift in educational administration from autocratic to democratic management. Eleven reasons why traditional power-based negotiations are no longer effective are discussed, with additional notes on their relevance to new management challenges in elementary/secondary education. Effective negotiation involves the following: redefinition of the concepts of power and leadership; recognition of compromise; inclusion of marginal groups' interests; recognition of human rights; an unambiguous leadership role; and acceptance of short-term decreased productivity. "Tough-minded management" is offered as a viable leadership style based on tolerance, flexibility, and persistence. (LMI)

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HERE'S HOW

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11 Reasons for Negotiating Power

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A major change in management over the past decade has been the shift from the *autocratic* manager—"Do it my way or leave!"—to the *democratic* manager—"Here's what has to be done. Now, how shall we go about doing it?"

These days, most organizations and institutions are shifting from a pyramid-shaped command structure in which all direction comes from the top down, to a wheel-shaped collaborative structure in which there's maximum opportunity for cross-consultation and consensus-building. In fact, in many organizations today the pyramid has been replaced altogether by the participatory "quality circle."

Most organization experts and most managers are enthusiastic about this trend toward decentralized management and the diffusion of power throughout the workforce. They say it mirrors trends elsewhere in society: *e.g.*, the return of political power to the community and even neighborhood level and the establishment of independent "profit centers" within large corporations.

But in an environment of decentralized and diffused power, how are executive decisions really made and how does anything get done? More particularly, in the current trend in education toward power-sharing at the individual building level, how does an elementary or middle school principal—*i.e.*, the school-based manager—get *anybody* to do *anything*?

The answer, say Earl Brooks and George S. Odiorne, two widely regarded management consultants, is through *negotiation*. Furthermore, they call negotiation the new "managerial style for the nineties." In their book, *Managing by Negotiations*, Brooks and Odiorne offer a number of reasons why "power-based negotiations of the old-fashioned sort are no longer sufficient." Although written with an industrial or business audience in mind, many of their reasons clearly apply to education, also, and are especially pertinent to the evolving role of the principal as a school-based manager.

Herewith are 11 of Brooks' and Odiorne's reasons (set off in different type below), with additional notes on their relevance to the new management challenges within the nation's elementary and middle schools.

Leaders have been made to feel guilty about the spotlight of wielding power [say Earl Brooks and George Odiorne]. It has been drilled into us in school from the earliest years, and is fairly well embedded in modern culture, that **the power seeker and power wielder is somehow a bad person**.

A popular novelty T-shirt carries the following headline in bright colors: "Because I'm the Mother!" The joke, of course, is that such an expression of raw power would *never* be screamed by that wonderful, compassionate person wearing the T-shirt.

And if *you* wore a T-shirt that said, "Because I'm the Principal!" it would be the same joke: such a decent, caring, self-respecting principal would *never* say such a thing.

A more realistic headline, but with no humor attached, would go something like this: "As you may recall, I'm your principal and I would certainly appreciate the chance to sit down with you and talk through our problem."

This article is based on material drawn from *Managing by Negotiations*, by Earl Brooks, PhD, and George S. Odiorne, PhD, published this summer by Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co. of Melbourne, Florida (236 pp., $28.50 per copy). Dr. Brooks, a widely respected consultant to private industry, is professor emeritus of negotiations, human relations, and personnel management at Cornell University's Graduate School of Management. Dr. Odiorne has been professor of management studies at New York University, the Universities of Massachusetts and Michigan, and most recently Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, Florida. The Editors of *Here's How* thank Drs. Brooks and Odiorne for permission to quote from their newest text.

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No flexing of administrative muscle. No unleashing of raw power. That's out.

Just a reasonable attitude leading to negotiations. That's in.

People in charge who will sometimes compromise and perhaps even occasionally submit to others are considered somehow nobler and wiser than those who dominate, intimidate, coerce, and control others.

This is another way of expressing a concept we tell our students: It's not important whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.

In meetings with parents or with staff, do you dig in your heels until you get your way regardless, or are you willing to concede a point here and there in order to reach consensus? In other words, what is your top priority: a victory for *you* or a victory for *your school*? If it's the latter—as it should be—then you ought to be prepared to compromise and even "lose" a negotiating point now and then, if you want to be considered, as Brooks and Odiorne say, "somehow nobler and wiser."

Democracy and egalitarianism, which have been the ideals of our political system, are now considered both **ideal and attainable for the workplace as well**, and bosses are supposed to recognize this fact.

Principals are passionately devoted to both ideals. Nevertheless, some principals are inclined to look upon these ideals as airy abstractions, not real working precepts that can guide the life of their school.

"One person, one vote," for example, is not a rule that applies only to general elections; it can apply just as well to your weekly and biweekly staff meetings and monthly parent meetings. Its application in school-based management means that you honestly want every member of the school community to express his or her opinion on any matter of substance . . . and they all know it. You're sharing not only power but also ownership.

The free expression of personal opinions on a routine basis by teachers, parents, or students—whether or not they support your own position—is the basis of the negotiating process. Real negotiations take place and consensus is reached only when all parties feel they can comfortably express their opinions and exercise their votes, as the democratic ideal requires. And this precept is as appropriate for the management of your school as it is for the governance of our nation.

The revolution of the left-behinds, including such people as women, racial minorities, ethnic groups, handicapped, ex-convicts, and those of alternative sex preferences, has stressed the need to talk to such people and **learn of their interests and respond to their rights and needs**. Such negotiation is often provided in laws of affirmative action, equal rights, and compensatory quotas.

The American school principal has already written a proud record of affirmative action to provide equal employment opportunities in our schools. But some principals unfortunately do not maintain that affirmative commitment, once the new employees are on board. That's a mistake.

Every principal needs to be sensitive to the involvement of minority employees in the life of the school—or the *lack* of involvement. If there's a lack of involvement, you need to know why. Could it be the close-knit and exclusionary attitude of other staff members? Or could it be your own failure to offer little gestures of welcome and support? Through such modest gestures you can continue to affirm to minority employees and to the school community in general that you're glad they're all on your team.

Finally, being hired by your school is not the sum total of an "equal opportunity" for a racial or ethnic minority or a person with a disability. But being treated every day as an equal on your staff *is* a full and "equal opportunity." The principal, therefore, has to be willing to negotiate the sharing of power not only with white males and females but also with African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and persons with disabilities, male and female. Whenever this occurs, we know that democracy is alive and well in that school.

It is better to be interdependent than independent. The prevailing culture which emerged in the sixties and seventies makes it clear that we all need one another. Thus we should **learn to encounter, confront, debate, and negotiate with one another** in order that everyone gets in the act of sharing in the fruits of a modern society.

This notion of *inter*dependence, seemingly at odds with our commitment to individual freedom, has evolved in our society as a corollary to—and not the enemy of—the fundamental values of democracy and egalitarianism.

During the rambunctious sixties and seventies, as authors Brooks and Odiorne remind us, we saw Americans push their individual freedoms to the limit. But we also saw the establishment of communes, cooperatives, and collectives, all of which required an equally serious commitment to interdependent living.

Some veterans of the sixties and seventies are school principals today; a greater number are teachers. The balance between independence and interdependence which they tried to achieve for themselves 10 and 20 years ago is the balance we all try to achieve in our own lives today. It lies at the heart of many a dialogue in a teacher's lounge or PTA meeting.

Bureaucracy and complex forms of organization produce a dehumanizing environment, and the people who are turned into instruments of organizations have a right to assert their individual rights and interests within that framework.

This is a key reason that many large school districts—both urban and suburban/rural—have not reaped all the supposed benefits that come with economies of scale. The people working within those districts tend to feel power*less* in the face of the organization and the few people who run it.

The impetus for school-based management, in part, has come from the response of individual school personnel concerned less with the economies of scale and more with the human indignities *caused* by scale. The individual

principal, sensitively managing his or her own building, represents the last best hope for public education's "mega-districts." Through day-to-day and face-to-face negotiations within each elementary and middle school, a measure of humanity is injected into an otherwise mechanistic organization.

Leaders are people who **rule by the assent of the governed**, not people who seize power and wield it. The university president who fails to confer with faculty, the corporate president who doesn't consider the interests of the various stakeholders, such as customers, stockholders, employees, and government regulators, are regularly unseated by their constituencies. **This has produced a great turnover of leaders in the past decade** at every level of society.

Brooks and Odiorne don't mention them, but among the leaders who have recently been "turned over" and turned out are some school administrators who had neither the time nor the inclination to hear what teachers, students, parents, and others had to say about their education program.

Talking—*and listening*—usually signify the start of a negotiation process through which power and control can be equitably shared by many, rather than hoarded by one. The order of magnitude may be different, but the force of popular outrage that topples a dictator in Central Europe is the same force that can topple a despotic principal in the heartland of America.

Power has not been destroyed by the coming of the age of negotiations, it has simply been **spread more thinly among more people**, rather than concentrated in the traditional leaders. This diffusion and fractionalizing of power is seen by people as being desirable, even if we **sometimes pay for it in lower efficiency and higher costs**.

Many proponents of a negotiated approach to leadership argue that it is ultimately more efficient and more effective than the autocratic approach. The key word here is "ultimately." The principal who (correctly) embarks on the path of democratic leadership and power-sharing must be prepared for possible delays in the implementation of programs, formation of committees, drafting of documents, and so on. If "time is money," than the extra time consumed by negotiation will mean higher costs.

But—*ultimately*—the results will be far superior than any results produced by raw power.

Garnering of power is paid for by a whole series of small debts, and **these debts are paid in giving something to the governed**. The process by which these debts are totted up and dispensed is negotiation.

When describing the negotiation process, many people acknowledge the "give-and-take" that's required. Then they move right along and neglect to describe specifically what is given and what is taken. But the negotiation process is nothing less than the trading of specifics.

The school principal, as an officer of a public agency, is limited as to the giving and taking that may be possible in negotiations. In exchange for gaining faculty consensus to begin a "whole language" program in your school, you might then delegate to/give to a select teachers committee the task of developing the "whole language" program; but the decision to implement the program must remain your decision and cannot be delegated/given away in the negotiation process. Therefore, if you are committed to the wheel-shaped command structure, mentioned earlier, in which power is negotiated and shared, you must nevertheless be absolutely clear about which powers you can actually and legally share/give away/trade and which ones you cannot. In other words, in the wheel-shaped command structure, there is still a hub—and you are it.

Most organizations have multiple objectives, many of which are mutually exclusive. **Making trade-offs between competing goals** is a necessary skill of leadership, and trading off is **the province of negotiation**.

At some point in an otherwise average staff meeting, you may hear someone observe that "we can't do X and do Y at the same time. We either should do X—or forget about it." But you know that the real world is rarely that clear-cut, and such an observation should therefore be a signal for you to bring into play your most effective negotiation skills.

In a modern school with a dedicated staff, an attentive student body, and a concerned community, many partisan objectives, at first blush, will appear to be diametrically opposed. But few really are. There may be conflicts of process and of priorities, but they need not be permanently so. Most can be resolved through negotiations.

The principal who hears a question framed as "either-or" should be prepared to do some trading off down the line. "Either-or" is usually not forever.

At the conclusion of their chapter on "The Age of Negotiation," Brooks and Odiorne suggest that we need "tough-minded management" in our social and political institutions in order to make the transition from power-based to negotiation-based leadership. But, they add, "[b]eing tough-minded doesn't mean being mean-spirited, brutal in action, or harsh in language. Rather it means having a high tolerance for frustration, a thick skin, a capacity to bounce back when you hit an obstacle. It means a willingness to stick with tough decisions in the face of strident minority pressure, patience to wait for things to run their course before making changes, and persistence in making changes by moving others who resist change . . .

"For the future executive"—including the elementary or middle school principal who becomes a true school-based manager—"this age of negotiation," Brooks and Odiorne promise, "will be one of excitement, challenge, and exhilaration." □

PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY

This article is in support of the following *Standards for Quality Elementary and Middle Schools* (NAESP: 1990, Revised): LEADERSHIP (a written statement of beliefs and goals achieved through staff consensus) and SCHOOL CLIMATE (students, staff, and parents are cooperatively involved in the life of the school). It is also in support of the LEADERSHIP PROFICIENCY (the effective management of group processes), as given in *Proficiencies for Principals* (NAESP: 1986).

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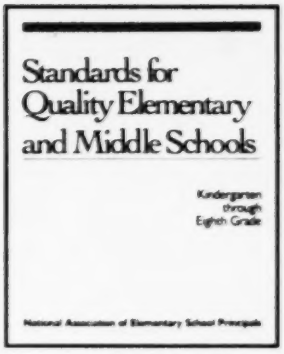

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